



File Code: 2720

Date: January 27, 2020

Dear Interested Party,

The Aspen-Sopris Ranger District of the White River National Forest (WRNF) is soliciting comments on a proposal from Sunlight Mountain Resort (Sunlight) to install a new chairlift, construct a pit toilet and enhance trail improvements at the resort. This project is proposed within Sunlight's Special Use Permit (SUP) area and is consistent with the 2019 Sunlight Mountain Resort Master Development Plan amendment. The attached map (Figure 1) depicts the proposed projects. Your comments on this proposal are being sought at this time. This information is also available on the project webpage: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=57417>

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to improve guest access to intermediate and advanced ski terrain. The need for this project would provide direct access to intermediate and advanced ski terrain by eliminating the need to use Tercero or Segundo and Primo Chairlifts. Additionally, this would provide access to underutilized trails, increase access to repeat users, and improve visitor experience.

Proposed Action

Sunlight proposes to add a new chair lift and extend winter trails in the terrain known as the East Ridge area. The East Ridge is primarily intermediate/advanced ski terrain and is currently served by using a combination of the Tercero or Segundo and Primo chairlifts. The proposed new East Ridge chairlift will ascend approximately 4,500' linear feet from a location at the base of the mountain on private land near Four Mile Creek, to the top terminal located on National Forest System lands within Sunlight's operational boundary. The proposed alignment follows mixed ownership with approximately 2,000 feet spanning the White River National Forest. The average tree clearing width for the lift alignment is approximately 40' each side of the centerline. The top terminal location will sit between *Rebel* and *Beaujolais* ski runs. Approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ acre will be cleared for catwalks to provide access to *Rebel* and *Grizzly* trails from the new top terminal.

The top terminal will include an operator building and engine drive and motor room. Approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of vegetation will be cleared at the top terminal to facilitate the unloading area, operator building and motor room.

A small pit type outhouse with approximate 10'x10' footprint would be constructed in an area adjacent to the top terminal for public and operator use.

Sunlight would construct the new area using a spider hoe, forklifts, front end loader, and helicopters to install the top and bottom terminals, towers, and tower foundations. A new buried power line measuring approximately 250' long would be installed from an existing electric vault towards the top terminal. Concrete installation for the top terminal, bottom terminal, and line towers would be installed utilizing concrete trucks and front-end loader or similar equipment. In total, the proposed project would result in less than 5 acres of ground disturbance. All disturbed areas would be revegetated per a



Revegetation Plan upon completion of the project. Construction staging and assembly areas will occur primarily on private lands.

Categorical Exclusion

Due to the minimal amount of new disturbance associated with the proposed improvements, the WRNF is considering categorically excluding this project from analysis in an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS). For a Proposed Action to be categorically excluded from further analysis in an EA or EIS, it must fit one of the categories contained in Forest Service Handbook 1909.15 Chapter 30, and there can be no extraordinary circumstances related to the specific Proposed Action that would warrant further analysis. The proposal to replace the East Ridge chairlift fits into category 32.2(3) "Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land."

How to Comment and Timeframe

Written comments must be submitted via mail service, facsimile, electronic mail, or in person, and comments concerning this action will be most helpful if received by or before February 23rd, 2020. Written comments must be submitted to: Scott Fitzwilliams, c/o Devon Cotsamire, Lead Mountain Sports Administrator, Aspen-Sopris Ranger District, 620 Main Street, Carbondale, CO 81623, FAX (970) 963-1012. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or MS Word (.docx). Comments may also be submitted electronically at:

<https://cara.ecosystemmanagement.org/Public//CommentInput?Project=57417>

Persons comments should include: 1) name, address, telephone number, and organization represented, if any; 2) title of the project of concern (i.e., Sunlight Mountain Resort East Ridge Chairlift Project Project); and 3) specific facts, concerns, or issues, and supporting reasons why they should be considered.

This public scoping period will be the only opportunity for individuals interested in or affected by this proposal to identify any potential extraordinary conditions or significant issues before the Responsible Official makes a decision.

Thank you for your interest in ski area management projects. To request further information on this Proposed Action, please contact Devon Cotsamire, Lead Mountain Sports Administrator, Aspen – Sopris Ranger District devon.cotsamire@usda.gov

Sincerely,



SCOTT G. FITZWILLIAMS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure: Project Map

cc: Kevin Warner, Roger Poirier, Devon Cotsamire, Monte Lutterman